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ABSTRACT

Teacher empowerment and participation is essential for successful reform of education. This paper considers basic school/university partnership needs, including off-campus study opportunities, university experience in such partnerships, decision making and implementation procedures, faculty attitudes toward teachers, and needs assessment processes. An overview is provided of Project Linkage, a partnership developed betwen Long Island University (New York) and a New York City school district, that sought to provide staff development opportunities for teachers. The project's goals, background, and design are discussed. The course sequence for a master's degree program established by the partnership is also described. (CB)

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PROJECT LINKAGE: SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM FOR INNER CITY TEACHERS

by

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1. Introduction: Partnerships and Reform

The educational reform movement of the 1980's, is exemplified in two most significant reports, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century: (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy) and Tomorrow's Teachers, (A Report of the Holmes Group). Each makes reference to the need for significant changes in the ways that schools will function and these reports discuss the vital area of teacher preparation. The Carnegie Commission states that "real reform cannot be accomplished despite teachers. It will only come with their active participation." The Holmes group cites, as a important goal, the connection of higher education institutions to schools. Further, the group states that if university faculties are to become more expert educators of teachers, they must make use of expert teachers in the education of teachers.

Both of the statements cited above speak to the issue of teacher empowerment, another strong force on the 1980's educational scene. These observations of the reform movement provide an opportunity for us to rethink traditional in-service preparation programs and to reflect upon how innovative school/university collaboratives can reshape the ways that teachers strengthen their skills. The purpose of this paper is to provide some overall considerations which need to be addressed prior to entering into a collaborative, to describe a model collaborative project and to share some preliminary findings as gathered from project participants in the District 13/ Long island University Project Linkage.

2. Basic Considerations for Partnerships

Before embarking upon a program of school/university collaboration a number of basic questions must be answered at the university and school district level as indicated below.

1. Is the university willing to extend its offerings off campus?
2. Has the university worked previously with school districts so that a collaborative is a natural outgrowth of past efforts?
3. Can decisions as to implementation be made quickly at the university level?

Nothing turns a practicing educator off more than administrative foot dragging.

4. Is the university willing to enter into a teaching partnership utilizing faculty as well as qualified practitioners in the field?
5. Will the district provide space for course offerings?
6. Is faculty willing to enter into "curriculum negotiations?" The point here is an openess to build course content to include topics that reflects specific school district needs and philosophy.
7. Does the university have someone on staff who is comfortable working with superintendents, principals and teachers, if possible a "past practitioner?"
8. Can scheduling of courses be flexible to meet teacher's needs? For example, if 30 contact hours are required for a 3 credit course, do we have the option to plan 30 two hour sessions, 10 three hour sessions or plan course offerings for weekends?
9. Is faculty willing to teach at off-campus sites and understands that collaborative programs strengthen community/university relationships?
10. Will curriculum, although modified by field considerations, contain the latest research on teaching and learning, giving participants the theoretical base for good practice?
11. Is the collaboration based upon an assessment of school district needs?
    For example, are there many newly assigned teachers who need to complete additional course work or what specific areas of curriculum does the school district want to strengthen.

If there is consensus in regard to the answers to these and many more questions there is then the basis upon which a school district/university partnership can be built.

3. Description of University and School District

Prior to embarking upon a description of Project Linkage, it would be of value to provide an overview of the two collaborative institutions.

Long Island University

The Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University is an urban complex in the heart of downtown Brooklyn. The faculty seeks to provide a well-rounded education for inner-city youth and in-service teachers who, in most instances, must work while pursuing their education. The needs of the urban, inner-city students are unique and require an institution with leadership and vision about their place in the world. Many urban youth come to LIU seeking careers in teaching.

The specific mission of the School of Education is to prepare excellent teachers for the schools in the New York City area. Most of our undergraduate students are from the local schools and our graduate students are employed in the 13 districts that surround the University as well as in districts far from our campus. We work closely with the districts to discern personnel needs and services that will assist them in teaching the children of New York City.

At the Brooklyn campus of Long Island University, an important tradition of the Division of Education is singular dedication to the educational needs of students of many ethnic backgrounds, cultures and interests. Our faculty is sensitive to the needs of the multi-ethnic population that we serve. Since programs are individualized and classes are small, we insure a good faculty-student ratio and continuous dialogue between faculty and students. Students tell us that they are pleased to find faculty available to talk to them about their individual problems.

Because we are preparing leaders for the Brooklyn community and we must endow them with leadership qualities, our mission is to provide examples of leadership in the communities. We engage in partnerships related to fundraising, sharing resources and bringing about reform built on reality. We seek to prepare people not only for careers in the New York City educational system, but also to prepare people who are committed to the community and its cultural activities and community organizations. We work closely with many civic and cultural organizations from various ethnic groups to make the programs more meaningful.

Our mission includes helping to develop Brooklyn and to make it a more desirable place where people live and work. We are actively involved in the cultural renaissance that is now taking place in the borough.

Community School District 13

This district is representative of most urban school districts. Its residential areas are ethnically and economically diverse. Approximately 80% of the school population is black, another 18% is Hispanic, and not more than 2% is white. The district provides an education program for approximately 15,500 pupils in grades kindergarten through nine. There are 18 elementary schools, 17 of which qualify for Chaper 1 funds.

Rogers and Chung (1983) characterized Community School District 13 as one of the most effective districts in New York City. Between 1974 and 1985, the percentage of students in the district who were reading on or above grade level was 22.1 in 1974; 22.9 in 1975, 36.8 in 1976; 36.0 in 1977; 31.7 in 1978; 29.8 in 1979; 41.0 in 1980; 46.6 in 1981; 47.5 in 1982; 56.7 in 1983; 55.5 in 1984; and 58.9 in 1985. Improvements were reflected in mathematics as well. Between 1981 and 1985, the percentage of students in the district that scored on or above grade-level on the city-wide mathematics test was 43.9 in 1981; 50.3 in 1982; 56.3 in 1983; 61.5 in 1984 and 61.6 in 1984. (The city-wide mathematics test was not administered to all grades prior to 1981.)

Building a tradition of excellence is an insistent theme in Community District 13. This theme does not reflect an unrealistic desire to be perfect, or almost perfect in all that is done. Rather, this theme persistently acknowledges the long-range goal:

> To continually get better in all that is done in order to become the first urban school district where every school is instructionally effective for poor and minority students. The mottoes "When you cease getting better, you stop being good. Good is not good where better is expected" are constant reminders that the district can, ought to, must and will accomplish this goal.

Since unfocused action is counter-productive, our very action is guided by a model of change that ensures quality performance from every member of the school community. The needs of students are the heart of every improvement effort.

4. Rationale for Project Linkage

"Our goals also lead us out, from the universities in which intending teachers study, to the schools in which they must practice. We have become convinced that university officials and professors must join with schools, and with the teacher organizations and state and local school governments that shape the schools, to change the teaching profession. Schools no less than universities are places in which teachers learn (Holmes Group, p.3-4)".

A personnel review conducted in October, 1985 in Community School District 13, Brooklyn indicated that there were approximately 145 newly-assigned teachers. In addition, numerous teachers were relatively new, working as temporary per diem substitutes on long-term assignment.

An analysis of this information revealed a need for a program of graduate study for those teachers. Long Island University had previously indicated a commitment to work with Community School District 13 on programs of mutual benefit for both the university and the school district. ("our schools and universities must open up new connections with schools." Holmes Group, p.20.)

Instructor magazine recently conducted and published the result of a Beginning Teacher Survey of those teachers planning to continue teaching next year. The factor cited most frequently as the most important reason for selecting teaching as a career was that the "school system allows for professional growth." The project described addresses this need. The teachers in the collaborative program would be actively involved in their studies. They will have the benefit of being assisted by both college faculty and district administrators.

During the fall, 1985 preliminary meetings were held at Long Island University to discuss the possibility of offering a Master of Science in Elementary Education at an off-campus site in Community School District 13. The plan was to offer a customized program of teacher education at the graduate level as a collaborative undertaking between the school district and the university. An underlying premise was that the curriculum would meet the needs of working educators and would reinforce the philosophy, goals and objectives of Community School District 13.

A needs assessment was carried out in District 13 and more than thirty-five teachers assigned to elementary schools demonstrated an interest in participation. As a result, an orientation meeting was held with staff on June 17, 1986 to describe elements of the proposed program.

It should be noted that the collaborative described in this paper is only one of many possible models, ranging from simple to complex. A school district/university partnership may involve cooperation in:

- .Offering specific courses to meet district needs
- .Providing consultant service to districts for program development
- .Planning conferences on topics of mutual interest
- .Developing joint grants for funding
- .Development of on-campus talented and gifted programs
- .Utilization of university facilities for district students
- .Providing advanced placement courses for high school students
- .Joint sponsorship of on-campus alternative schools

It is important to identify needs and resources available. This information assists in selecting the right collaborative project.

5. Project Goals

Consultation with school district staff resulted in the establishment of the following project goals:

- .To create a linkage between a University School of Education located in an urban center and a public school district.
- .To provide a model, based upon the collaborative effort, which can be adapted by other universities and school systems throughout the United States
- .To develop a sense of commitment to the profession and the school district as a consequence of active participation in the program.
- .To enhance teachers' sense of power as a result of participating in the development of a Master's Program.

.To combat teacher isolation by providing a setting where teachers can share positive experience and learn how to overcome classroom related problems.

6. Project Design

.The Director of Elementary Curriculum and instruction, District 13, and the Assistant Dean School of Education, Long Island University, reviewed the present curriculum for the M.S. in Education Program in Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

.A tentative schedule of courses to be offered (Fall, 1986-Spring 1988) was developed. The program includes six credits in special education as required by the New York City Board of Education and New York State Department of Education.

.Course materials to include outlines, requirements, bibliographies and other materials would be developed as a collaborative effort. Participants in this collaboration will be the Director of Elementary Curriculum for District 13 the Assistant Dean of Long Island University, the course instructors and other university staff.

.A specific sequence of courses was designed to insure that participants moved through the program in a sequential manner.

.Course work would be followed by intervisitation opportunities for participants so that teachers would have an opportunity to view ideas in practice and would feel less isolated.

.Classes would be conducted off-campus, in District 13 and on campus, at times convenient for teacher participants. Course instructors would be selected by university and district personnel. These instructors would be regular faculty members in the School of Education of Long Island University and selected adjunct personnel from Community School District 13 and Central Board of Education offices.

.Participants would move as a cohort through the program and would be expected to make a commitment to complete the program and teach in District 13.

.District and university staff would meet on a continual basis to evaluate and modify program curriculum, as necessary. Input would be solicited from project participants.

7. Course Sequence for the M.S. in Elementary Education

It was indicated, in the previous section of this paper, that participants would move as a cohort through the program. The students would not be able to select courses at random. The rationale for this approach was based on the desire to provide students with an apperceptive base of knowledge which would help them in succeeding courses. For example, since each course would focus on recent research in the field, it was felt that Education 601-Analyzing Educational Research would be a good beginning course since it would assist participants in the analysis of research in content courses that would follow. The sequence of courses is listed below:

District 13/Long Island University
M.S. - Elementary Education
Course Sequence

Fall, 1986 (6 cr.)

EDU 601 - Analyzing Educational Research (3 cr.)
EDU 517 - Child Development (3 cr.)

Spring, 1987 (6 cr.)

EDU 621 - Learning in an Urban Setting (3 cr.)
EDU 626a- Methods and Materials of Teaching Reading (3 cr.)

Summer, 1987 (8 cr.)

EDU 606 - Contemporary Philosophies of Education (3 cr.)
EDU 663 - The Exceptional Child: An Overview (3 cr.)
EDU 626c Methods and Materials of Teaching Social Studies(2 cr)

Fall, 1987 (7 cr.)

EDU 626b Methods and Materials of Teaching Mathematics (3 cr)
EDU 626d Methods and Materials of Teaching Science (2 cr.)
EDU 626e Using Computers to Teach (2 cr)

Spring, 1988 (9 cr.)

EDU 640 - Educational Evaluation (3 cr.)
EDU 660 - Mainstreaming Inner-City Handicapped Youngsters (3 cr.)
EDU 520 - Reading and Critical Thinking (3 cr.)

It should be noted that special provision was made for the exceptional student who could not complete the sequence in order. Individual tutorials were provided, as necessary.

8. Evaluation

During the second year of the project (fall, 1987) an inventory instrument was administered to program participants. The total responses numbered twenty and results are summarized below:

Age.

The age range of respondents was between 20 and 55 years.

Years in service

The average number of years in service for the group was 8.5. 9 participants had 0-5 years, 3 had 6-10 years, 1 had 11-15 years, and 1 had 16 or more years in service as a teacher.

Grades taught

Primarily, for this group of respondents, the grades taught were early childhood/elementary grades; with the greatest percentage of respondents (30%) teaching at the 3rd grade level. Kindegarten had 10% of respondents, 1st grade - 20%; 2nd grade - 5%, 4th grade 5%, 5th grade - 5% and 6th grade- 20%.

Tenure and License

Of the respondents, 35% were fully tenured teachers. Within the group, 100% were licensed by New York City - 70% held regular licenses and 30% held per-diem licenses.

Overall Program Satisfaction

According to this instrument, 35% of respondents were satisfied and 65% were somewhat satisfied with courses taken in the program. No respondent indicated dissatisfaction.

Confidence Scale

Within the evaluation, participants were asked to quantitatively rate their confidence levels in regard to their ability to do graduate work. They were also asked to respond concerning their confidence regarding teaching ability as compared to their level of confidence at the start of the program.

55% of the respondents felt that the program enhanced their ability to do graduate work. 75% noted that they felt more confident in their teaching performance as a result of program participation.

Course Value

The respondents were asked to rate the value of the courses which emphasized methods. 50% responded that the courses were worthwhile and 49% felt that the courses were somewhat worthwhile for them as classroom teachers. Only one respondent indicated that one course was not worthwhile.

Professional Growth

When asked, if as a result of participating in the program, respondents grew professionally, 75% of the participants responded that they had indeed grown professionally.

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of each course according to criteria listed below. The chart indicates their responses.

	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Below Average
Level of Course Work	35%	35%	30%	---
Value of Courses for Teachers	40%	35%	25%	---
Significance for Intellectual Growth	40%	35%	25%	---
Validity of Course as Part of a Masters Program	45%	35%	20%	---

It should be noted that no respondent rated any criterion at the below average level.

The results gathered from the administration of the inventory instrument provide some interesting conclusions in regard to how program participants view the collaborative project. Of particular

interest is that most respondents indicated:

.Overall program satisfaction

.Increased confidence in their ability to do graduate work

.Increased confidence in their ability to perform as teachers

.That course work improved their performance as teachers

While the sample is small, it is encouraging to note the positive nature of the participants responses.

9. Other Considerations

Collaborations with local educational agencies are exciting ventures. They bring renewed vitality to the university community. However, certain cautions should be pointed out to those who embark on collaborative projects.

.Courses offered at off-site locations must contain content at the graduate level. They cannot be "watered down" in-service offerings.

.Standards for staffing must be maintained to insure that students are receiving quality instruction. In essence, quality control must be maintained.

.Course schedules must reflect the same student contact hours as on-campus.

.Library facilities must be provided, on campus, to insure that students are given adequate research sources.

.Provision must be made for the exceptional student who cannot complete the course sequence in order.

. Visitation and review to include ongoing evaluation must be built into the program

The success of any collaborative effort is dependent upon the sense of commitment of the collaborators. This, in summary, is the most important factor to be considered by potential collaborators.

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